Spanning the Gap

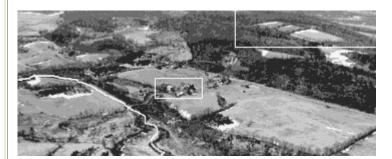
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Historic Wallpack Center

Spanning the Gap
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Editor's note: The U.S. Bureau of Geographic Names (BGN) approves the spelling "Wallpack Center", and this is the spelling on the Wallpack Center Post Office. Many local maps and references, however, including Walpack Historical Society, presently use the spelling "Walpack".



An aerial view of Walpack Valley and the village of Walpack Center around 1965, looking southwest toward Walpack Mountain. The village stretches west (right) from the Walpack Church and the cluster of buildings marked in the center of the photograph. The course of the Flat Brook is highlighted in white at the lower left. The Delaware River and Shapanack Flats are visible in the box at the upper right, on the far (east) side of Walpack Mountain.

Nestled in a fertile valley, surrounded by open fields, is a picture-postcard village from the past. The very sight of Walpack Center is a respite from our now crowded, hectic, noisy world. The village seems so untouched by the present -- how did this come about?

Around the middle of the 19th century, Walpack Valley valley was relatively isolated by Kittatinny Ridge to the west and the highlands of New Jersey to the north. The valley had many small farms with Peters Valley (or *Bevans*), Walpack Center, and Flatbrookville serving as village centers for the farms. A "comfortable" 3 to 7 mile wagon ride apart, each village contained general stores, post offices, blacksmith shops, churches and schools.

Located near the center of the valley, Walpack Center was more isolated than the other villages,



Main Street, Walpack Center, in its heyday.



The same view today.

which at least were on the major crossroads or near the river ferries. People passed their lives quietly, tending fields, gardens, animals, and shops.

By the early part of the 20th century, however, the industrial revolution caught up with Walpack Center. The automobile gave the farmers access to larger, more distant service centers, but mechanization also meant that small farms could not compete with larger farms of the Midwest. The lure of high pay in the factories and big cities proved too much for the young to resist. The population in Walpack Center began to decline, and with it went a quieter, more relaxed way of life.

In 1965, Walpack Center became part of Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The National Park Service is taking a number of steps to preserve Wallpack Center. Some of the buildings are being used as employee residences. *Walpack Historical Society* is using one building as their museum and headquarters. A study is underway to determine what changes the landscape has undergone over the years and how the park should manage that landscape now.

Walpack Center Church is in the distance.



The former post office at Walpack Center.



The 1889 date on the bridge across Flat Brook at Walpack Center.